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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 GUANGZHOU 000351

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SUBJECT: Confirmed Cases of H5N1 Virus on Guangdong Duck Farm, No
Additional Outbreaks Reported

REF: A) Hong Kong 1034, B) Hong Kong 1061, C) Guangzhou 160

11. (U) Summary: It looks as though authorities in south China understand the need to move quickly on a potential H5N1 threat. The National Influenza Reference Laboratory and China's Ministry of Agriculture reported an outbreak of highly pathogenic H5N1 Avian Influenza on a duck farm in Jiangmen City, Guangdong province. Poultry on the farm began to fall ill June 10, and 3,873 ducks were dead by June 13. To prevent the spread of the disease, the local government culled the farm's remaining 17,127 ducks and disposed of 35,000 hatching eggs. No additional cases of H5N1 infection have been reported in the endemic area or in other parts of Guangdong province. End Summary.

Local Action Results in Quick Response

12. (SBU) On June 17, the Ministry of Agriculture and the National Avian Influenza Laboratory confirmed an outbreak of highly pathogenic H5N1 Avian Influenza at a duck farm in the Xinhui District of Jiangmen City in Guangdong province. (Note: Jiangmen is located in the western Pearl River Delta approximately 100 KM southwest of Guangzhou. End note.) The farm's poultry began falling ill on June 10, and 3,873 ducks were dead by June 13. The Jiangmen Agricultural Bureau was notified on June 13, and preliminary tests indicated the presence of highly pathogenic Avian Influenza, leading to the local veterinary bureau culling the farm's remaining 17,127 ducks and disposing of 35,000 hatching eggs. After confirming the outbreak on June 17, the Guangdong Agricultural Department dispatched a taskforce of experts to assess the situation and respond to the emergency. Three tons of disinfectants were sent to the site, and the Xinhui District government blockaded the surrounding area. Additional measures included culling and disposal of local poultry that was raised in backyards or had not developed adequate antibody levels to resist possible infection. In addition, all live poultry markets in the area have been closed.

Initial Investigation Suggests An Isolated Outbreak

13. (U) On June 17, the provincial veterinary station and local disease prevention and control center began testing antibody levels of poultry located within a 3 KM radius of the Jiangmen outbreak. Random tests of 425 poultry serums in 28 large-scale poultry farms showed that 96% of tested samples contained the required antibody levels to help resist infection. Conditions in the affected area are still being investigated, but initial reports suggest that the outbreak has not spread to additional areas.

Local Official Provides Further Insights

14. (SBU) Yu Yedong, deputy director general of the Guangdong Bureau of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Medicine, said the duck farmer came from Zhejiang province and his farm is relatively small, with a total of only 21,000 ducks. This outbreak was isolated to mostly full-grown ducks and previous outbreaks among ducks did not tend to spread beyond the immediate duck population. Following the outbreak, questioning of the duck farmer revealed inconsistent and contradictory answers. The investigation team suspects this farmer had not taken required vaccination measures, and then tried to cover up this fact for fear of punishment. Mr. Yu also said the investigation is on-going, with all surrounding poultry farms showing satisfactory antibody levels at this time. As an added precaution, authorities have proceeded with vaccinations for all susceptible fowl within a 5 kilometer radius of the farm.

17. (U) Beijing Embassy ESTH has cleared this cable.

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